

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO



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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 14, 2002

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Councilmember Atkins Proposes Continued CCDC Funding for SeniorHousing

LU&H Committee Supports Plan; Increases Request To \$311K

Funding for seniors, especially those living on the brink of homelessness downtown, continues to be one of my top priorities in office. That is why I'm elated that on Wednesday, November 13th, the members of the Land Use & Housing (LU&H) Committee voted unanimously to support my proposal to direct the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) to continue to fund the Transitional Housing for Displaced Seniors (THDS) program.

Last year, as part of a broad-based collaborative which included the City of San Diego, the San Diego Housing Coalition, Senior Community Services and others, CCDC agreed to allocate the \$168,000 needed to lease the 35 SRO units included in the program. This year, due to rising rental costs and the pending closure of the Capri Hotel--which will force the program to rent more rooms in the less affordable Sarah Francis Homotel--the amount needed has risen to \$191,000.

Earlier this year, City staff requested that CCDC again fund the THDS program to help house seniors in downtown SRO units leased by the San Diego Housing Commission. As the transitional housing program item came forward to committee, funding remained uncertain. Therefore, I sent a memo to the five LU&H members and CCDC Chair Hal Sadler to propose that the funding issue be addressed, and to invite CCDC to allocate the resources necessary to keep the program alive.

Last month, Councilmember Ralph Inzunza and I held a press conference to call upon the General Services Administration to replace the 298 SRO units which have already been lost and the 100 units which will soon be lost when the Capri closes in August 2003 in preparation for construction of the new Federal Court House building downtown. Many seniors are homeless because these units are gone. Statistics provided by Senior Community Centers clearly show that each month, more and more seniors need help meeting basic needs such as food and shelter. This being so, it is imperative that the THDS program continue to bring case management and shelter to San Diego's homeless seniors. That's why these 35 units are so vital.

At the LU&H meeting, several once-homeless seniors testified that they are not eligible for this program because there is no funding for assisted living. In response to this testimony, Councilmember

Frye asked that the motion include an additional \$120,000 to fund five assisted-living beds for a year. The motion passed unanimously and will now be considered by the full Council.

Closely tied to the program is Senior Community Centers, which will provide case management to seniors transitioning into more permanent housing. A long standing member of the downtown community, Senior Community Centers has been at the forefront of serving seniors, providing such services as housing, case management, recreational activities, and meals.

I feel very strongly that members of our senior community should not be faced with living on the streets. They deserve to be heard, housed, and helped.

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